DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 618 HE 030 880

AUTHOR Jones, Connie A.; Gower, Diane S.
TITLE Distance Education Goes On-Line in the 21st Century.
PUB DATE 1997-11-12
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Memphis, TN, November 12-14, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; Community Colleges; *Distance Education; Educational Finance; *Educational Policy; Faculty Development; Higher Education; Nontraditional Students; *Public Colleges; State Colleges; State Universities; Technology Transfer; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Tennessee

ABSTRACT

This study examined distance education at Tennessee Board of Regents institutions of higher education. Both four-year and two-year institutions were surveyed via electronic mail. Thirty-five percent of the surveys were returned. The results indicated that all responding institutions were involved in distance education, specifically to reach potential students who had limited access to their campuses. The top five concerns of the institutions in regard to distance education were providing course materials for students, training faculty, ease of system operation, range of services, and cost effectiveness. The most frequently available mediums for offering classes were teleconferencing, cable television, and compressed video. While 80 percent of the universities surveyed had distance education policies, only 40 percent of those policies included provisions for on-line courses. The major issues cited regarding the future of distance education included the need for adequate funding and continued faculty support. (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Distance Education Goes On-Line in the 21st Century

ED 418 618

Connie A. Jones
Associate Professor
Middle Tennessee State University

and

Diane S. Gower
Assistant Professor
Middle Tennessee State University

Paper presented at the 1997
Mid-South Educational Research Association
Annual Meeting

November 12, 1997

AE 030 880

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Connie A. Jones
Diane S. Gower
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Distance Education Goes On-Line in the 21st Century
Connie A. Jones and Diane Gower

Introduction

Colleges and universities across the nation are finding themselves in uniquely challenging situations. Poised to enter a new century, universities find the needs of their constituents dramatically changing. Many universities are experiencing phenomenal growth while others are facing a significant decline in student enrollment. Issues related to students and their instructional needs will influence higher education well into the next century.

The uniqueness of today's student populations may require new curricula, different methods of instruction, and different delivery systems for offering university courses. Universities regularly develop new curricula and seek more effective methods of instruction. The current challenge, however, is to find alternative instructional delivery systems that match the lifestyles of the new student bodies. Distance education may provide the alternative delivery systems that are needed.

Distance education is defined as "... an event or a process that involves direct two-way communication between people..." (Filipczak, 1995). Universities that use distance education to offer undergraduate and graduate courses have multiplied since the 1980s. "Current estimates predict that 50% of all students in college by the year 2000 will take courses via some form of distance education" (Hoyle, 1997).

An evaluation of 13 classes offered through compressed video at the University of Northern Iowa took place in August of 1995. The overall evaluation by students was favorable, with 87% of the students having positive attitudes (Bozik, 1996). Courses

offered on-line or via the internet appear to have the most flexibility for students while allowing the instructor to regulate the information presented and allowing the university to control access.

Procedures

The intent of this study was to investigate distance education at Tennessee Board of Regents institutions. The survey administered was developed by the researchers. The instrument consisted of ten short answer questions. The survey sought to identify the types of distance education alternatives used on each campus, to acquire information on the policies that each institution had designed to govern distance education on their campuses, to identify the major issues of concern on each campus, and to identify their future plans for distance education.

A list of Tennessee Board of Regents institutions with their e-mail addresses was obtained. A survey was sent to both the four-year institutions and the two-year institutions in the system. E-mail technology was used to send and receive survey results. Three weeks after the initial mailing a second survey was sent to the institutions who had not responded.

Collection and Interpretation of Data

A quasi-experimental design was used in this study. It was a one-group, post-test design. The survey responses were tabulated and summarized. The following results were obtained. Thirty-five percent of the surveys were returned. All respondents indicated that their institutions are involved in distance education specifically to reach potential students who have limited access to their campuses. In addition each institutions indicated

that they currently provide assistance to faculty members in designing courses to fit the technology available on their campuses.

The top five concerns of the institutions are shown in Table I. They include: providing a range of services in compressed video classrooms, providing necessary course materials for students, training faculty, ease of operation, and the cost effectiveness of distance education.

Table I

Average Ranking of Distance Education Concerns

Providing coursed materials for students	1.83
Training faculty	2.66
Ease of system operation	4.16
Range of services	4.33
Cost effectiveness	4.83

* 1 indicates the highest level of concern

The most frequently available mediums for offering classes were teleconferencing, cable television, and compressed video. Eighty to one hundred percent of the institutions responding offered graduate and/or undergraduate classes using these mediums. While 80% of the universities currently have distance education policies, only 40% of the policies include provisions for on-line courses. Most universities plan to expand their distance education programs. The major issues regarding the future of distance education on the campuses were: obtaining adequate funding (50%) and maintaining continued faculty support (50%).

Conclusion

The results indicate that distance education is actively being pursued at Tennessee State Board of Regents institutions. The variety of types of services available with at least

60% usage suggests an active level of interest and involvement. The need to reach potential students was also a strong indicator that the institutions have made efforts to provide distance education as a alternative means of delivering instruction.

Universities must take a proactive position by establishing advisory committees to monitor academic concerns of their faculties external and internal policy issues. Cost-effectiveness must be monitored as well since it was also identified as a concern for all institutions.

Universities must be attuned to faculty concerns. They should continue to provide assistance to faculty in designing their courses for effective presentation through distance education technology. The concept of student and faculty assessment will take on new meanings as the various types of distance education are employed.

Issues that were not addressed but may be concerns for the future include alternative methods of computing faculty workloads, controlling access to class material, and making student services available through alternative technical means. According to the Director of the National University Continuing Education Association, "The reality is that most public institutions will probably need to develop a mix of on-campus and distance education courses in order to remain affordable" (Kohl, 1996). Distance education is the wave of the future for reaching all students in the 21st century.

Bibliography

Bozik, Mary. "Student Perceptions of a Two-Way Interactive Video Class," Technological Horizons in Education Journal, 24(2), pp. 99 - 100.

Filipczak, Bob. "Putting the Learning into Distance Learning", Training, (October, 1995).

Hoyle, Glenn. 199. "Distance Learning on the Net" http://homepage.interaccess.com/~ghoyle/college.html

Kohl, Kay, J. "Distance Learning on the Net" http://homepage.interaccess.com/~ghoyle/college.html